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ABSTRACT

The role of community services and continuing education in the community college must be carefully analyzed by educational leaders in the changing milieu of the 1980's. Never has close affiliation with the parent institution been more critical to the welfare of continuing education, which gains strength from being mainstreamed in terms of financial assistance, space, supporting services, and the less tangible value derived from being "college." Although continuing education has long been an accepted purpose for many community colleges, when pressures arise from the need to retrench, support among administrators, middle-level management, and faculty may change and may not be enough to ensure a viable, responsive program. The regular full-time faculty is a special group with a special relationship to the community services program. Because of their strong voice in institutional management and its affect on the allocation of resources, the support of this faculty group, even more than that of the part-time faculty that teaches in the continuing education program, must be cultivated to strengthen the program. Another way of strengthening the community service program is to establish credibility by avoiding claims concerning finances or enrollments that cannot be supported. A final element in ensuring the continuing viability of the community service program is responding to changing educational needs by adding new and eliminating low-priority programs. (LAL)

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FACING THE PRESSURES OF THE '80's

A Cooperative Venture

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FACING THE PRESSURES OF THE '80's

A Cooperative Venture*

The 80's are different! After more than three decades of dramatic growth, much of American higher education is facing conditions of decline, not growth. That decline is not limited to enrollment but is reflected on a national scale by funding restraints in many states. If enrollment were the only factor, my remarks would be quite different for this group. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and every segment of education begins to feel the pressure.

Continuing education and community services are not new on the higher education scene. They have been around in various forms for a very long time, even predating the community and junior colleges. Though some community colleges very early had large enrollments in non-credit activities, the great growth phenomenon is of more recent origin.

To continue serving their constituents with viable continuing education programs, leaders in the field must lay careful plans that go beyond mere determination of needs. They must consider the vastly changing milieu within which they operate. Those conditions cut across a full-range of resources and management functions - money, people, equipment, time and space.

*Remarks by Joe B. Rushing at the National Conference on Community Services and Continuing Education, Fort Worth, Texas, October 11, 1984.

KEEP IN THE MAINSTREAM

Been to a chautauqua lately? Probably not unless some college or university resurrected the name for a continuing education program. That free-standing model of "adult education" of the nineteenth and early twentieth century has gone the way of the buggy whip and the bustle. It, like many other endeavers, lacked the support to be gained from an institutional base.

Never has close affiliation with a parent institution been more critical to the welfare of continuing education. There are mutual benefits to be derived. For the institution, especially the community college, it is the good will and public support engendered by a responsive program which serves a segment of the population desiring no college credit or the structured university curriculum. For continuing education there is the strength to be gained from financial assistance, space, supporting services, and the less tangible value derived from being "college".

Mainstreaming continuing education is neither achieved automatically nor maintained easily. Working within the constraints of collegiate policies and traditions may tax the patience of continuing education leaders. But taxed patience is a better alternative than working outside the system. When left to survive on their own resources, community services and continuing

education will be on hard times. Indeed, most programs would not survive.

CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS

Continuing education has long been an accepted purpose for many institutions. The proper statements appear in college publications. Top administration gives its overt support. The program is generally accepted as an integral part of the organization mission. Faculty interest will range from enthusiastic support, to widespread neutrality to well hidden hostility.

That is in the good times.

When pressures arise from the need to retrench, these relationships may change or their true nature will emerge. Administrative support can insure high priority for CS/CE up to a point. Beyond that point, (its location is somewhat indefinite) administrative support may not be sufficient to insure a viable, responsive program. Other relationships may eventually be deciding factors.

Does mid-level management view CS/CE as normal responsibilities or something added because the CEO wishes it? Would Admissions and Records be relieved to see a reduction of the work load by diminishing numbers of non-credit classes and students? Would Library and Bookstore strongly resist reduction in staff that could force curtailment of services to CS/CE? Can the Finance Office be relied upon to place high priority on CS/CE when making mandated budget cuts? These questions are

ones that will be answered long before the crisis. They will be answered by the attitudes of key people-attitudes that have been shaped by their own commitments and by their relationship to continuing education programs and those leading them.

The regular faculty is a special group in a special relationship. Faculty members have long had a strong voice in institutional management, either through a collegial model of participation or other means including unions. Because of this participatory approach, the faculty voice will be heard when institutional resources are to be reallocated.

To assume one faculty view of CS/CE would be a serious mistake. At least three categories exist. The first group is made up of those "true believers" who will support the program under all circumstances. They initiate non-credit courses in their disciplines. They volunteer to write syllabi. They are eager to teach non-credit classes. They view the CS/CE staff as resource people to assist them in helping the college achieve its goals.

The second group is at the other end of the scale. They are sincere, well-meaning people who view higher education in a very traditional manner. They are described as being "academic" in their approach. They are embarrassed by the newspaper ads announcing continuing education courses in knitting and contract bridge at their college.

In earlier days they were highly critical of what they viewed as over emphasis of career education. In this era of the high technology kick they have withdrawn from that battle but are greatly encouraged by the growing demands for more and better education in the "basics". To most of them CS/CE is extra baggage and must be thrown overboard in case of rough sailing. These are important people. They can make solid contributions to the college or university. Cultivate better relations if you can, but the odds dictate that you not spend too much of your energy in that effort.

A more important and much larger group consists of those faculty members who are neutral, even friendly, but not involved. Here are potentially strong supporters of CS/CE. Brian Donnelly gives us good advice in the Catalyst, Summer 1984, when he says, "...involve full-time faculty early ...(and) provide for faculty development program." If this does not occur when things go well, in times of retrenchment, some may follow others in viewing CS/CE as a target of opportunity. Many have viewed with distress the events of a California community college in 1983. When the board of trustees was forced to reduce faculty, the union responded by targeting the college ITV program. As a result, a great community service was threatened and the repercussions may be felt in community colleges across the country.

You may well ask, "Why this emphasis on the full-

time faculty most of whom never teach in our programs?" A good question. Typically your faculty is composed of part-timers. They have little or no impact on college policy. They are not protected by tenure. For many, working for you is a secondary interest. Love them and keep them, but build your strength elsewhere.

ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY

We live in a quantitative society. In countless ways, from evaluating our colleges to describing the "good life", we use quantitative measures. Institutions are judged by average salaries, number of volumes in the library, student/faculty ratios, and of course, enrollments. Fall registration is hardly over before the questionnaire's and telephone calls begin to arrive. "What does your enrollment look like?" There is a note of anxiety creeping into the voices of North Texas questioners this year. Credit enrollments are down in many institutions. Despite the fact that our research departments predicted a decline and though we knew conditions indicated it would occur, there is still some hesitancy in admitting it has happened.

What happens to continuing education enrollment remains to be seen. It may decline, remain level, or increase. Whatever the trend may be, numbers in CS/CE will remain a debatable issue. While all enrollment data are subject to manipulation (head count for the press, FTSE for the accrediting agency!) non-credit figures can be least enlightening. When things go well, this

can be of minor significance. Who questions the report of 10,000 students in CS/CE activities during the year? No one unless the budget cutters must go to work. Then, it takes little time for boards, legislators and other policy makers to determine that in instructional time, this may equate to fewer than 400 FTSE.

Credibility is even more important in the fiscal realm. If your program makes a profit, or breaks even, congratulations! But avoid claims that cannot be supported. Nothing raises the fear of some faculty more quickly than the thought of another department making money! Expect to be challenged and do not become entrapped in idle claims. If you are subsidized by the institution, either with money, space, or services, don't hide or minimize the fact. It is a sign you are in the mainstream. Acknowledge it and protect credibility.

WATCH OUT FOR SUCCESS

In an educational setting, there may be nothing more beguilingly dangerous than an idea or program that is highly successful. This is not to denigrate an effective and worthwhile project. We all seek to develop those. But success has a way of outliving its time. We tend to become complacent when things go well and a course or activity may outlive its time. This possibility is exacerbated by the natural languor of educational change.

CS/CE leaders must be agents of change. Complacency and comfort are conditions to be avoided. More than 900 non-credit classes appear in our Fall, 1984, schedule. I am told that 85% of these are placed there routinely because they have "made" in the past. That is all right unless they be taken for granted. Ongoing study of what we offer should be a part of the system. History, itself, is not enough. Conditions around us can be instructive. The experiences of Justin Boots and Levi Strauss may give some clue to our future enrollments in country and western dance classes!

The temptations are abundant. Every week we could fall in line behind a new piper or jump aboard a new bandwagon "High technology" is the current theme, and its devotees are legion, including many who can not define it. High tech is a fact of life. We live with it every day. Yet educators must use great discretion in responding to this and other needs of a rapidly changing social order.

Responding to change is more than adding the new. In fact, that is the easy part. The more difficult task is to eliminate that which has served its time or which falls too far down on the priority list. In the environment of the '80's the administrator who can not say "No" is in trouble. Decisions implementing change are more painful when they adversely affect our colleagues. I can assure you that, in Texas at least, the pain is likely to become

more frequent.

CONCLUSIONS

I was invited to speak to you from the point of view of the CEO. That I have tried to do. My observations may not be the same as yours. From the Chancellor's desk things look both clear and simple. That in itself is validation of Murphy's Law which says, "No task will turn out to be as easy as it appears." It is easy for me to say, much more difficult for you to achieve.

In the great scheme of things, CS/CE can be the most responsive elements of education. The reality of decline is not all bad. Decline does, in fact, present as many opportunities as problems. If we face it with determination, skill, and optimism, our institutions and programs will continue as valuable assets to society.

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